

An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 511 (which corresponds to Litir 815). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Ronnie and Colin are old friends. Each tries to get one over the other. They are retired. They have too much time for thinking about things – great and trifling. One day, they were sitting together on a bench.

'What a view I got the other day,' said Ronnie.

'Were you in a beautiful place?' asked Colin.

'You could say that, perhaps. I'm not sure,' said Ronnie.

'Where were you?' said Colin.

'I was walking past the park of lomnochdaichean,' said Ronnie.

'The park of lomnochdaichean?' said Colin. 'What's that?'

A place where people walk around without clothes on them.'

'Oh ... is lomnochdaiche the Gaelic for nudist? I've never heard the like!'

'I know,' said Ronnie. 'There's not too many of them in Scotland!'

'It's too cold!' said Colin.

'Well, they're indoors in a

Tha Ragnall agus Cailean nan seann charaidean. Bidh iad a' feuchainn ri làmh-an-uachdair fhaighinn air a chèile. Leig iad an dreuchdan dhiubh. Tha cus ùine aca airson a bhith a' beachdachadh air gnothaichean – mòr agus suarach. Latha a bha seo, bha iad nan suidhe còmhla air being.

'Abair an sealladh a fhuair mi an latha eile,' thuir Ragnall.

'An robh thu ann an àite brèagha?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'Dh'fhaodadh tu sin a ràdh, 's dòcha. Chan eil mi cinnteach,' arsa Ragnall.

'Cà' robh thu?' thuir Cailean.

'Bha mi a' coiseachd seachad air pàirc nan lomnochdaichean,' thuir Ragnall.

'Pàirc nan lomnochdaichean?' arsa Cailean. 'Dè tha sin?'

'Àite far am bi daoine a' coiseachd timcheall gun aodach orra.'

'O ... an e lomnochdaiche a' Ghàidhlig air nudist? B' eòlach do sheanair air sin!'

'Tha fhios agam,' thuir Ragnall. 'Chan eil cus dhiubh ann an Alba!'

'Tha i ro fhuar!' arsa Cailean.

'Uill, bidh iad fo chabair ann an

warm building. Except on summer days,' said Ronnie. 'Anyway, it was a summer's day. I stuck my head over the fence. I spoke to an old man and an old woman.'

'Were they naked?' asked Colin.

'Indeed they were,' agreed Ronnie. 'Just as they were the day they were born.'

'Eh?' said Colin.

'Well, not exactly as they were when they were born,' admitted Ronnie with a smile.

'And you spoke to them... What did you say?'

' "Think of me," I said to them, "as an animal. I'm on the great plains of Africa. You are also animals. You are like me, but different. I'm a 'striped ass'. You are asses. And do you know what I want to say to you?" '

'Excuse me,' said Colin. 'What is a 'striped ass'?'

'A zebra,' said Ronnie. 'Like an ass with stripes on it.'

'Oh, alright. That makes sense. Did they reply to you?' asked Colin.

'No,' said Ronnie. 'They didn't get a chance. Because I gave them an answer.'

'And?' asked Colin.

'I said – "you're like me in every way, except that you don't have a stripe [a stitch of clothing] on you!'

togalach blàth. Ach a-mhàin air làithean samhraidh,' thuir Ragnall. 'Co-dhiù, 's e latha samhraidh a bha ann. Chuir mi mo cheann thairis air an fheansa. Bhruidhinn mi ri bodach is cailleach.'

'An robh iad lomnochd?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'Bha, gu dearbh,' dh'aontaich Ragnall. 'Dìreach mar a bha iad an latha a rugadh iad.'

'Eh?' thuir Cailean.

'Uill, chan ann buileach mar a bha iad nuair a rugadh iad,' dh'aidich Ragnall le gàire.

'Agus bhruidhinn thu riutha... Dè thuir thu?'

' "Smaoinichibh orm," thuir mi riutha, "mar bheathach. Tha mi air machraichean mòra Afraga. Tha sibhse nur beathaichean cuideachd. Tha sibh coltach rium, ach eadar-dhealaichte. 'S e asal-stiallach a tha annam. 'S e asail a tha annaibh. Agus a bheil fhios agaibh dè tha mi airson a ràdh ribh?" '

'Gabh mo leisgeul,' thuir Cailean. 'Dè tha ann an asal-stiallach?'

'Seabra,' thuir Ragnall. 'Coltach ri asal le stiallan air.'

'O, ceart gu leòr. Tha sin a' dèanamh ciall. An do fhreagair iad thu?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'Cha do fhreagair,' thuir Ragnall. 'Cha d' fhuair iad teansa. Oir thug mi freagairt dhaibh.'

'Agus?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'Thuir mi – "tha sibh coltach rium sa h-uile dòigh, ach nach eil stiall oirbh!" '